

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRIDGE 01244 01 OF 02 011543Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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R 311945Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2897
INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRIDGETOWN 1244

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PDEL, PINR, PINT, DO

SUBJ: INDEPENDENCE DATE FOR DOMINICA PUSHED BACK; IDEOLOGICAL
SHOWDOWN EXPECTED

REF: BRIDGETOWN 1101 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY

PREMIER PATRICK JOHN NOW SETS THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE
FOR DOMINICA SOMETIME IN THE SECOND OR THIRD WEEK OF
DECEMBER 1977 BUT NOT LATER THAN JANUARY 1978. JOHN IS
ALSO READY TO COMPROMISE WITH THE OPPOSITION TO MAKE
DOMINICA A REPUBLIC WITHIN THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH UPON
INDEPENDENCE WITH A PRESIDENT ELECTED BY THE HOUSE OF AS-
SEMBLY TO FUNCTION IN THE PLACE OF THE CURRENT GOVERNOR.
JOHN AND OTHER MODERATES WITHIN THE RULING
DOMINICA LABOUR PARTY ARE ON COURSE FOR A SHOWDOWN WITH
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PAGE 02 BRIDGE 01244 01 OF 02 011543Z

MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS LED BY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND WORKS MICHAEL DOUGLAS AND HIS BROTHER ROOSEVELT
"ROSIE", AN ADVOCATE OF CUBAN-STYLE MARXISM, OVER POLITICAL
POWER. THOUGH JOHN SEEMS TO HAVE THE ADVANTAGE FOR THE
IMMEDIATE FUTURE, OBSERVERS INDICATE HE MUST PRODUCE AID
AND JOBS IN ORDER TO WEATHER THE RADICAL THREAT IN THE
LONG TERM. SHOULD THE PROSPECT OF THE EMERGENCE OF A

SECOND MARXIST STATE, HOWEVER SMALL, IN THE HEMISPHERE BE SUFFICIENTLY DISTURBING TO THE USG, VIABLE COUNTER-MEASURES MAY HAVE SOME REASONABLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS IF INITIATED SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. END SUMMARY.

1. DOMINICAN PREMIER PATRICK JOHN TOLD EMBOFFS ON MAY 25 THAT AS A RESULT OF CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS IN LONDON MAY 16-20, THE GOD WILL NOW PUSH FOR INDEPENDENCE BY THE SECOND OR THIRD WEEK OF DECEMBER 1977. JOHN MAINTAINED THAT THE NEW, LATER DATE IS NECESSARY BECAUSE THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT WILL RECESS FOR THE SUMMER IN JULY AND NOT RECONVENE UNTIL OCTOBER WHICH WILL NOT ALLOW TIME TO MEET THE PREVIOUSLY SOUGHT INDEPENDENCE DATE OF NOVEMBER 4. IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS JOHN HAS SAID INDEPENDENCE WILL BE A REALITY BY JANUARY 1978 AT THE LATEST.

2. WHILE PUBLICLY CONTINUING TO ENDORSE THE IDEA OF RETAINING A GOVERNOR GENERAL FOR DOMINICA AND REJECTING THE IDEA OF A REPUBLIC, JOHN CONFIDED TO EMBOFFS THAT HE WILL SOON CONVENE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF HIS RULING DOMINICAN LABOUR PARTY (DLP) TO ENDORSE THE IDEA OF A PRESIDENT ELECTED BY THE DOMINICAN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND, THEREFORE, POST-INDEPENDENCE STATUS AS A REPUBLIC WITHIN THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH. JOHN EXPLAINED THAT "THE PEOPLE" WOULD NOT ACCEPT A FIGURE-HEAD GOVERNOR GENERAL AND THAT THE BRITISH, CITING THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE, MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD NOT ENDORSE A WORKING, I.E.POLITICAL, GOVERNOR GENERAL; HENCE, THE IDEA OF A WORKING PRESIDENT NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO THWART THE WILL OF THE HOUSE MAJORITY AND THE PRIME MINISTER. JOHN ALSO SAID HE HAS ACCEPTED THE IDEA OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

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PAGE 03 BRIDGE 01244 01 OF 02 011543Z

SENTATION FOR NINE NOMINATED MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE-AN IDEA FIRST PUSHED BY THE OPPOSITION.

3. IN SPEECHES ALONG THE ROUTE FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE CAPITAL UPON HIS RETURN FROM THE LONDON TALKS ON MAY 23, PREMIER JOHN CAREFULLY AVOIDED DIRECT REFERENCES TO SOCIALISM AND ABANDONED HIS NORMAL SALUTORY GREETING OF "COMRADES" IN FAVOR OF "FELLOW DOMINICANS". JOHN STRESSED THAT BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE WOULD HAVE A ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT DOMINICA. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS, JOHN AGREED WITH DEPUTY PREMIER HENCKELL CHRISTIAN, ALSO PRESENT, THAT DOMINICANS WERE BY NATURE "ANTI-COMMUNIST" AND THAT DOMINICA WOULD NOT BECOME A MARXIST STATE. IF THESE STATEMENTS AND ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF JOHN AND CHRISTIAN REPRESENT (AS IT WOULD SEEM) A POSITION MORE MODERATE THAN THOSE HELD BY SOME OTHER MEMBERS OF THE RULING DLP, THERE MAY SOON BE A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN JOHN AND A MORE RADICAL GROUPING LED BY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKS MICHAEL DOUGLAS -OSTENSIBLY OVER THE QUESTION OF SOCIALISM BUT ACUTALLY OVER WHO WILL HOLD

POWER IN POST-INDEPENDENCE DOMINICA. LOCAL OBSERVERS
FLATLY PREDICT THAT DOUGLAS WILL SOON BREAK WITH JOHN BY
NOTING CERTAIN OF DOUGLAS' RECENT ACTIVITIES WHICH, THEY
EXPLAIN, ARE UNDERSTANDABLE ONLY IN LIGHT OF AN INTENTION
ON HIS PART TO PROVOKE SUCH A BREAK. DOUGLAS, FOR EXAMPLE,
TRIED TO OUTBID JOHN ON MAY 23 BY PLEDGING FROM THE SAME
PLATFORM THAT THE GOD WOULD DECLARE U.D.I. IF INDEPENDENCE
WERE DELAYED BEYOND JANUARY 1978. DOUGLAS TOLD EMBOFFS ON
MAY 25 THAT CHIEF CREDIT FOR DOMINICA'S SUCCESS IN BRINGING
ABOUT INDEPENDENCE THIS YEAR BELONGED TO HIS BROTHER,
ROOSEVELT "ROSIE" DOUGLAS, AN EXPONENT OF CUBAN-STYLE MARXISM,
NOT PREMIER JOHN. DOUGLAS ALSO RECITED THE FAMILIAR LITANY
OF "LAND DISTRIBUTION, HOUSING NEEDS, GOVERNMENT PREDOMINANCE
IN DEVELOPMENTAL ECONOMICS, ETC." AND CONCLUDED "IF THIS IS
SOCIALISM THEN WE WILL BE SOCIALIST." BROTHER ROSIE, MEAN-
WHILE, HAS RECENTLY STEPPED UP HIS CAMPAIGN OF FILMS AND
LITERATURE ON THE BLESSINGS OF THE CUBAN MODEL AND HAS GONE
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PAGE 04 BRIDGE 01244 01 OF 02 011543Z

BEYOND THE RURAL VILLAGES OF DOMINICA'S NORTHWEST, WHERE HE
IS WELL-KNOWN, TO THE SOUTH COAST; HE IS ALSO TRYING TO
WIN OVER SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS TO HIS VIEWS. FREEDOM
PARTY SLIDE SHOW PRESENTATIONS AMONG VILLAGERS TO SHOW
DEVELOPMENTAL ALTERNATIVES REPORTEDLY CANNOT MATCH THE
SLICK, FULL-TIME, PRESUMABLY CUBAN-FINANCED EFFORTS OF
ROSIE.

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PAGE 01 BRIDGE 01244 02 OF 02 011531Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRIDGETOWN 1244

4. TWO BREWING SCANDALS WITHIN THE JOHN GOVERNMENT MAY WORK TO THE PREMIER'S ADVANTAGE IN THE EVENT OF A SHOWDOWN. ATTORNEY GENERAL LEO AUSTIN, A GUYANESE BY BIRTH, IS CURRENTLY UNDER PUBLIC CRITICISM AND MAY FACE DISBARMENT FOR SHORT-PAYING THE REVENUE DEPARTMENT ABOUT US\$1,000 IN PROPERTY TRANSFER FEES WHILE FINANCE MINISTER VICTOR RIVIERE IS REPORTEDLY ABOUT TO BE LINKED TO OTHER FINANCIAL WRONGDOINGS. DEALING WITH THESE SCANDALS MAY ALLOW JOHN TO EXHIBIT LEADERSHIP BY DISMISSING AUSTIN AND RIVIERE AND THEN, WITH TWO CABINET POSITIONS TO FILL, TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION IN THE DLP AND GOVT.

5. COMMENT: THE TENACITY OF OPPOSITION FREEDOM PARTY LEADER EUGENIA CHARLES IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN EXPLAINING THE DELAY IN DOMINICA'S INDEPENDENCE DATE AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLANS FOR A PRESIDENT, REPUBLIC STATUS AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR NOMINATED HOUSE MEMBERS. WHILE MISS CHARLES CLEARLY LOST IN THE LONDON TALKS ON HER IDEAS OF A REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE AND MEANINGFUL REPUBLIC STATUS THROUGH CREATION OF A POPULARLY-ELECTED PRESIDENT, HER LOBBYING AMONG UK OFFICIALS
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PAGE 02 BRIDGE 01244 02 OF 02 011531Z

PRIOR TO THE LATEST ROUND OF TALKS APPARENTLY HAD SOME SUCCESS. IN OPENING THE TALKS ON MAY 16, FOR EXAMPLE, PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF THE BRITISH FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE EVAN LUARD STRESSED THEMES FIRST VOICED BY MISS CHARLES WHEN HE SAID THAT THE PARLIAMENT IN LONDON WILL "WISH TO BE SATISFIED THAT THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTION WILL PROVIDE FOR THE PROTECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE RULE OF LAW AS WELL AS WISHING TO BE SATISFIED THAT THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE SUPPORT THE DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE." PREMIER JOHN, HOWEVER, BY COMPROMISING ON THE IDEA OF REPUBLICAN STATUS WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH IN ADVANCING THE IDEA OF A HOUSE-ELECTED PRESIDENT, HAS NEATLY UNDERCUT THE POSITION OF THE OPPOSITION BY MAKING THE PRESIDENT DEPENDENT ON THE HOUSE MAJORITY AND WILL OF THE PRIME MINISTER. WHEN COMBINED WITH HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF NOMINATED HOUSE MEMBERS, JOHN HAS LEFT THE OPPOSITION LITTLE SUBSTANCE UPON WHICH TO BASE FURTHER ATTACKS ON HIS INDEPENDENCE AND POST-INDEPENDENCE PLANS.

6. POLITICAL MANUEVERINGS WITHIN THE DLP APPEAR TO INDICATE A SHOWDOWN IN THE NEAR FUTURE BETWEEN PRIMIER JOHN AND OTHER MODERATES WITHIN THE GOVT AND THE DOUGLAS BROTHERS AND

THEIR SMALL, VOCAL AND RADICAL FOLLOWING. DOMINICAN POLITICAL
OBSERVERS OF VARIOUS PERSUASIONS AGREE THAT PREMIER JOHN
HOLDS THE UPPER HAND NOW AND FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.
THESE OBSERVERS POINT OUT, HOWEVER, JOHN MUST PRODUCE
SIZEABLE AMOUNTS OF FOREIGN AID AND JOB-CREATING IN-
VESTMENT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE PRE-EMINANCE OF HIMSELF AND
HIS MODERATE "PUBLIC-PRIVATE MIX" IDEAS OVER THE DOUGLASES
AND THEIR MORE RADICAL APPROACH. SHOULD THE DOUGLASES PREVAIL,
THE HEMISPHERE WOULD HAVE ITS SECOND MARXIST GOVT, ALBEIT
ONE RULING A SMALL ISLAND OF 70,000 PEOPLE. AS THE EMBASSY
HAS REPEATEDLY ARGUED, SHOULD THIS PROSPECT BE SUFFICIENTLY
DISTURBING TO THE USG, VIABLE COUNTERMEASURES ARE AVAILABLE,
ALTHOUGH TO HAVE ANY REASONABLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS, SUCH
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PAGE 03 BRIDGE 01244 02 OF 02 011531Z

COUNTERMEASURES MUST BE INITIATED SOON. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

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